DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 339 261 HE 023 922

AUTHOR Cooper, Rita; Smith, Barbara Leigh
TITLE Achieving a Diverse Faculty: Lessons from the Experience of The Evergreen State College.
INSTITUTION American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Oct 90
NOTE 5p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Association for Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036-1110 ($3.50 each, 1-10 copies; $2.50 each, 11 or more copies).
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT AAHE Bulletin; v43 n2 p10-12 Oct 1990

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Affirmative Action; College Environment; *College Faculty; *Ethnic Groups; Faculty College Relationship; *Faculty Recruitment; Higher Education; *Labor Turnover; Mentors; *Minority Groups; Personnel Selection; Staff Orientation; Teacher Orientation
IDENTIFIERS *Evergreen State College WA

ABSTRACT

Between 1986 and 1989, The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, increased its proportion of faculty of color from 11 percent to 20 percent. This was accomplished by reorganizing the college's approach to faculty hiring and retention. Keys to hiring success involved institutional commitment, utilization of inside resources, being creative in seeking applicants, doing research to locate applicants, being open minded, being flexible in disciplinary background requirements, requiring an adequately representative applicant pool, and becoming aware of unintentional barriers in the hiring process. Retaining a diverse faculty requires building a hospitable campus environment. Orientation programs for new faculty at The Evergreen State College offer a buddy system, written materials, a fall off-campus retreat, and workshops throughout the year. Assistance in helping new faculty to become familiar with the cultural norms and idiosyncracies on campus is especially important; the buddy system, which pairs a respected faculty member with some longevity within the institution with a new faculty member, was chosen to help communicate these norms. (JDD)

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ACHIEVING A DIVERSE FACULTY

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Lessons from the experience of The Evergreen State College.

ACHIEVING A DIVERSE FACULTY

by Rita Cooper and Barbara Leigh Smith

In 1987, The Evergreen State College dramatically reorganized its approach to faculty hiring and retention to achieve a goal of diversifying its educational environment. The new commitment and restructuring yielded dramatic results. The proportion of faculty of color increased from 11 percent in 1986 to 20 percent in 1989. From that experience we learned many practical lessons about how to hire and retain a more diverse faculty—lessons we believe other institutions can successfully apply.

Keys to Hiring Success

Among the suggestions we offer below are a few that may seem obvious, especially to readers already familiar with the process of hiring for diversity. We believe, however, that their importance warrants restating.

Commitment. The key to an institution's success is making hiring for diversity a real institutional priority. Accordingly, securing high-level commitments to your effort and sustained focus are the most fundamental prerequisites. Involving as many people as possible is also wise, since it builds the sense of investment and understanding of the hiring process.

Inside resources. Look internally for resources; you'll often find assistance in unusual places you hadn't thought of at first. Most colleges have people on staff who possess experience useful for an intensive hiring effort, and these staffers are often delighted to be included.

At Evergreen, for example, the director of personnel was reassigned for six months to help the academic departments with faculty hiring. Although it is rather unusual for personnel officers to work with departments in this way, the connection is actually quite natural. The director's experience proved invaluable to the effort, as she focused on building applicant pools and establishing long-term connections with graduate schools, professional disciplinary associations, ethnic organizations, and foundations. For us, establishing long-term connections meant looking at the pipeline of "potential" faculty to locate former graduates as well as promising graduate students about to complete their work. Not surprisingly, departmental secretaries were among our most useful contacts!

Creativity. Be creative in seeking applicants. Look first to your part-time faculty, where you'll often find people of color who would be delighted to apply for full-time positions. Look also to your nonteaching staff. Ask yourself whether there are staffers who would make good faculty members after additional graduate training. We believe you'll find many capable potential teachers already working in other roles if you will only look for them. Sometimes a "grow your own" strategy is a good approach, too.

Be sure also to look outside the academy for potential applicants. Many of the people who earn advanced degrees don't go into teaching. For example, a recent survey found this to be true for half of all African-Americans who

Rita Cooper is the director of employee relations at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA 98505.

Barbara Leigh Smith is an academic dean at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA 98505.

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recently earned Ph.D.'s. Early follow-up with graduate schools is one key to locating such potential faculty.

Although it is often more difficult to locate potential applicants in nonacademic settings, many people in government service and the private sector are or could be interested in a college appointment. At Evergreen, our follow-up analysis told us that 40 percent of the people we hired were not in a university when they applied; most of them were not even actively seeking a position until we approached them.

Research. It's clear to us that most schools don't work very hard at building applicant pools. To succeed, you must use existing resources and do research to locate applicants. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and disciplinary journals are not usually enough.

Many disciplines have special caucuses and guides to women and people of color in the discipline (e.g., *Directory of Ethnic Minority Human Resources in Psychology,* American Psychological Association). Also search out the numerous guides to minority organizations and associations (e.g., *1989 Guide to Multicultural Resources,* Praxis Publications; *Hispanic Resource Directory,* Denali Press; *Minority Student Enrollments in Higher Education,* Garrett Press). Sometimes individual institutions and institutional consortia have vita banks of women and people of color; watch for their ads in professional journals and *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Such sources will often assist you in your recruitment efforts.

Open-mindedness. Carefully examine your position descriptions for hidden barriers and dubious embedded assumptions. Generally we are far better at playing the doubting game than the believing game, and at many points in the hiring process mistaken and hidden assumptions can screen out good applicants. Playing the believing game can mean rethinking the wording of your ads, the kind of positions available, and the deadlines and application criteria. Many times institutions actually write ads intended to eliminate rather than invite applications, and their screening processes often operate in the same fashion.

At Evergreen, our faculty agreed to *require* multicultural expertise as an application requisite for a number of our positions, which we defined as substantive experience in dealing with, or as being a part of, an ethnic minority culture. We provided direction to help applicants describe their expertise through their educational background or degrees (e.g., Ph.D. Chicano Studies), through work in community organizations (e.g., Vista or Peace Corps in the Third World), or through teaching in colleges where the majority culture is an American minority ethnic group (for example, in Spelman). This simple change in our ads dramatically changed our applicant pools. In 1986, we identified only two people in an applicant pool of almost 100. Simply putting "equal opportunity, affirmative action employer" at the bottom of an ad is not enough.

We believe that requiring multicultural expertise for some positions was critical in communicating our serious intent to hire a diverse faculty. However, "multicultural expertise required" is not code language for hiring only people of color; our intent is to build a campus of faculty of all ethnic groups, with a commitment to cultural diversity.

Flexibility. At Evergreen, we also decided that we could be less restrictive than we'd been in our disciplinary background requirements. So, instead of looking for a Latin American historian, for example, we advertised for someone with a background in Latin American Studies. This opened up the position to people from a much wider range of disciplines. The strategy also had the desirable effect of recruiting people who could serve more broadly in our curriculum.

We also changed from set application deadlines to open deadlines. As a result, we can continue building files when the applicant pools are weak and keep following up on incomplete files that look promising.

Adequate pools. Require an adequate applicant pool—and don't compromise. Create a monitoring system that sets clear expectations about the adequacy of the pools. And, send a clear message that you will not fill a position if the applicant pool is inadequate, before everyone gets overly attached to specific applicants.

At Evergreen, before we rate any files, our affirmative action office now assesses whether the applicant pools are representative of the national pool for people of protected classes (women, Vietnam veterans, physically challenged, people of color). The assessment is, in effect, a measure of how good a job we've done in building our applicant pools. If a pool is inadequate, we reopen or continue the search until the pool is judged representative. For us, *representative* means having proportionate percentages of applicants relative to national availability statistics. It is an annoyingly difficult standard to set, but we still think it is worthwhile as a guideline. A variety of resources are available to help institutions develop such guidelines for women and people of color in the different disciplines. A call to your state's human rights department or to the federal EEOC office can assist with the effort.

There are many reasons why an applicant pool might be inadequate. Perhaps the job announcements weren't placed broadly

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enough and not enough people saw them, or perhaps they came out too late in the year. The real issue for an institution is whether it will allow these kinds of "reasons" to govern the search-and-appointment process.

Awareness. Beware of other unintentional barriers in the hiring process that can eliminate good candidates. Being careful in how you word and place your ads and in how you assess the adequacy of your applicant pools helps, but how you rate and read applicant files and the interview process itself are also important. If an institution is committed, it can take steps to reduce the typically zero-sum nature of the choices involved in faculty hiring. Rewarding committees that produce diverse candidate pools is one step in the right direction. Allowing more than the customary number of interviews is a useful incentive, too.

Sometimes simply broadening the committee helps. At Evergreen, we do all faculty hiring for the college with one well-trained committee. Subcommittees composed of disciplinary experts do the initial screening of the files. Thus we achieve a balance between disciplinary needs and the college's cross-institutional, long-term needs.

Analysis. Finally, when it's all over, analyze what works. At Evergreen, we surveyed our new faculty to find out how they learned about the position and why they applied. They gave us terrific suggestions for improving our hiring process. Analysis provides an excellent opportunity to refine your procedures and eliminate approaches that didn't work. It builds reflectiveness into the process and gives the participants a sense of closure.

Retaining a Diverse Faculty

Recruiting and hiring a more diverse faculty is only your first step. It's equally important that you build a hospitable campus environment so that your new faculty members thrive and remain at the institution. We believe that orientation for all new faculty is a good first step toward that goal. Few campuses, however, offer an effective orientation program, much less one that takes diversity into account. The campuses that do can attest to its value.

At Evergreen, we now have a comprehensive new faculty orientation system—for which one of the deans takes lead responsibility. The system consists of four parts: a buddy system, which pairs new faculty with veterans; extensive written materials, including a new faculty handbook; a fall off-campus retreat for new faculty, their buddies, and key communicators in the institution; and workshops throughout the year.

Even with such a substantial system, our faculty of color tell us that they face many challenges on the predominantly white Evergreen campus:

- increasingly encountering racism on campus and in the community;
- being put on a pedestal by their colleagues and treated disrespectfully as scholars, disciplinary experts, or individuals;
- being overburdened with committee work and leadership responsibility, as a sole role model;
- feeling profoundly lonely working with an ethnically homogeneous student body; and
- lacking support systems for comfortable social acclimation.

Looking at the lack of support systems as an example, we know that to feel at ease, new faculty need to become part of the community—particularly, to make contacts and pursue interests outside the academy. Assistance from their institution in making those contacts can help. Their adjustment also involves becoming familiar with the cultural norms and idiosyncracies on campus, it's the preferred days for teaching or where faculty eat lunch.

At Evergreen, we have chosen the buddy system to help communicate some of these norms. Paired with a respected faculty member who has some longevity within the institution, the new faculty member benefits from the veteran's wisdom and experience. The buddy helps the newcomer learn the institution's informal "rules of the game" and get acquainted with the community, and generally acts as a friend and supporter.

In our experience, if the number of faculty belonging to a particular ethnic group is small, it is likely that cross-group interchanges will form. At Evergreen, there is a natural coalition among faculty hired in the same year, and that coalition is strong among the American-born faculty of color and the foreign-born, regardless of ethnicity. Personally, we hope that our institution will not become defensive and see the bonding as separatism. We believe such a coalition can greatly assist an institution's effort to retain its faculty of color, if the institution encourages the group to make suggestions for improving the climate for multicultural diversity.

Finally, there is much that institutions such as Evergreen can do now to hire a more diverse faculty, but ultimately it won't be enough. We must also begin to build up the pipeline so that more students of color are attracted to college, graduate school, and the teaching profession. At a time when many of the nation's schools are becoming "majority minority," this is especially necessary. The literature tells us quite clearly that minority students need appropriate role models to succeed, and an ethnically diverse faculty can fulfill that need. It's imperative that we attack both ends of the issue—by aggressively working to hire a more diverse faculty now, while building the teaching corps for tomorrow. ■